

Preservation Programs (NWT)

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Conservator Anne Witty examining a document for treatment evaluation.

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National Archives and Records Administration

Preservation Programs



Surface cleaning the Preamble Page of the U.S. Constitution.

Preservation Programs at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) works with agency staff at 33 facilities across the country to preserve the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government. Successful preservation efforts are a key element in the fulfillment of the agency's mission "to ensure ready access to essential evidence...that documents the rights of American citizens, the actions of federal officials, and the national experience."

The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration 1997-2007.

www.archives.gov/preservation

National Archives and Records Administration

Preservation Programs

Preservation Programs is committed to preserving the physical well-being and informational value of a wide range of Federal records in the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration. A staff of 75 bring together preservation expertise and experience in the conservation of paper, books, photographs and objects; scientific research and testing; photographic services; photoduplication; audio-video and motion picture preservation; digital imaging; microphotography; and preservation and archival administration.

Preservation Programs

- writes and reviews preservation policies and regulations
- develops and, if necessary, implements records emergency and disaster plans for records storage facilities
- administers an integrated pest management program
- provides training regarding the proper implementation of preservation policies and procedures to NARA staff, other Federal agency employees, and the public
- ensures that storage environments are designed and maintained to prolong the life of records
- monitors and maintains the condition of the Charters of Freedom
- under the auspices of the Special Media Preservation Laboratory
 - maintains an active reformatting and duplication program for non-textual and textual records, as well as a digital imaging lab
- under the auspices of the Document Conservation Laboratory
 - administers a conservation program dedicated to the usable life of records in their original format
 - provides research, testing and preservation development services



Photographer Jerry Thompson processing photographic film.

The **Special Media Preservation Laboratory** duplicates and reformats, as necessary, records created in textual and nontextual formats. This includes duplicating motion picture film, still photos, microfilm, and sound and video recordings; microfilming paper records; reformatting audio and video recordings in obsolete formats that cannot be used on currently available playback equipment; and generating digital images of records for access and exhibition. These program activities result in the removal of fragile records from use, while still providing access to their informational content by capturing the information in a new format.



Electronics Specialist Jason Love with audiovisual reformatting equipment.

The **Document Conservation Laboratory**, comprised of four treatment labs and the research and testing lab, is responsible for conservation and preservation activities that prolong the usable life of records in their original format. The conservation labs treat and stabilize textual records (unbound papers, bound volumes, and cartographic items) and photographic images in the holdings of the National Archives and Records Administration and provide custom housings for these records as needed. In addition, conservation staff monitor the environmental conditions in NARA facilities in the Washington DC area; provide preservation training to Archives employees, contractors, and vendors who handle records; assure the preservation of documents on exhibit in the Washington, DC facilities; and furnish technical advice and assistance to ensure the preservation of items lent for exhibition.

The research and testing lab conducts a preservation science program that includes developing specifications for and providing quality assurance testing of materials used to prolong the useful life of records (e.g., folders and boxes) and of materials that will be used in the proximity of records (e.g., storage furniture, paint, and cleaning supplies); implementing basic research into preservation issues; and evaluating specific preservation approaches.

Photo of US Constitution by NARA Photographer, Earl McDonald, 2002. Other photos by NARA Photographer, Roscoe George, 2002.